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THE LOTUS MAGAZINE

A GREAT LOAN EXHIBITION OF OLD MASTERS
OWNED BY AMERICANS

By Gustav Kobbé



THE exhibition of old masters with which Messrs. M. Knoedler & Company signalized the formal opening of their new galleries left a profound impression. All the pictures in the exhibition, nearly fifty in number and all old masters, had passed through their hands and were loaned to them by their customers. The names of the owners were not given in the catalogue, but as several of them are Founder Patrons or Associate Patrons of The Lotus, it is appropriate that this magazine should mention them as an interesting part of the record of an exhibition, which is bound to take its place in art history beside some of the famous foreign exhibitions, in which many of these works figured, before they passed, through Messrs. Knoedler & Company, into the hands of American owners.

A small entrance fee was charged, the proceeds going to the Artists' Fund and Artists' Aid Societies, which benefited materially, as the attendance was very large.

Undoubtedly the clou of the exhibition was the so-called "Parma Velasquez," owned by Mr. Henry C. Frick, one of the portraits of Philip IV of Spain, painted by the greatest of Spanish masters. It is a wonderful portrait. To have been able to view it in this exhibition is a privilege and almost in itself an education in the art of portraiture. For it sums up in itself everything a portrait should be. Artists who visited the exhibition stood lost in admiration of its unsurpassable qualities.

This three-quarter length, life-size figure, turned to the left, in red doublet with silver embroidery, white silk sleeves and white collar, the left arm resting on the sword guard, one hand holding a black hat, the other a white baton, is not the portrait of a handsome man. Yet even when you turned away from it you felt the weak blue eyes following you about the room. The portrait is so life-like, it brought King Philip IV, of Spain, himself into this gallery on Fifth Avenue. There stood the monarch as he looked at Fraga in 1644, at the age of thirty-nine, in his uniform of a Field Marshall.

His doublet is described as red. More properly it is of old rose and not of that color as we know it, but the old rose of antique rugs softened still more by the silver tones of the embroidery. The whole pose, even to the way the left elbow rests on the sword guard, is easy and natural. You feel the grip of the fingers on the baton, even the weight of the hat

in the hand that holds it, and its effect on the muscles of the entire arm. Then there is the subtle adjustment of the weight of the body which rests on the left leg, the right leg being extended. You feel this, although the picture is only a three-quarter length and the legs are not seen. The King is standing outdoors. No landscape is perceptible in the background and yet vague as this background is, it conveys a wonderful suggestion of atmosphere. Velasquez was a master of contour; with him the rounding of an arm, the curving of an elbow, the oval lines of a chin, all had their rationale. There stands this figure of an uncheerful looking man. It is solemn; it is silent; and yet it hypnotizes you with the psychology of its subject's race and time.

This portrait was painted for the Queen of Spain. In 1748 it was taken from the Royal Palace in Madrid to the Ducal Palace at Parma by Don Philip, the third son of Philip V. There it remained until 1859. In that year the States were incorporated with the Kingdom of Italy and the widow Duchess, mother of Duke Robert, removed it to Wartegg Castle near Zurich. Later Duke Robert removed it to Schwartzau Castle in Austria; and when he died in 1907, the portrait went to his heir, Francis Elias de Bourbon. From him it passed through Messrs. Scott & Fowles, to the Messrs. Knoedler, from whom it was bought by Mr. Frick. Now called the "Parma," it is sure in time to become known as the "Frick Velasquez."

Interesting to compare with this is another Spanish portrait, that of a cavalier by Murillo, and belonging to Sir Wil-

liam Van Horne. Illustrating another extreme of Spanish portraiture it gives the subject a poetic cast of features and wonderfully penetrating, expressive eyes. The hair is black and flowing, in fact the entire picture is in black tones save the lace cuffs and the stiff, white collar that projects from under the chin like a shelf. There is also a glossy grey sheen from the doublet and the gleam of a sword. A picture by Murillo, also representing a cavalier, with the same style of dress and the same peculiar collar, is in Dorchester House, London. The present portrait was formerly in the collection of Duke George, of Leuchtenberg, St. Petersburg, 1851, and was illustrated in the Leuchtenberg catalogue. For a time it hung in the Hermitage Gallery at St. Petersburg. In the same room as these portraits was the Frans Hals portrait of a woman that was sold from the Yerkes collection, two Rembrandts, one of them a wonderfully lighted portrait of a young Rabbi in a black skull cap; an exquisite small Van Dyck, portrait of the Countess Laccari; a Ver Meer; and a little portrait by Gerard Terburg, of Margaretha Van Haexberger, standing by a chair. To mention only a couple of details of workmanship, there is the painting of the white illusion in the woman's dress, while the chair looks as if you could take hold of it and push it all around the room in the picture.

Among the English old masters were two Romneys, which may be said to have divided the admiration of the visitors. Of these a portrait of the Lady Isabel Erskine, Countess of Glencairn, belonging to Mr. M. C. D. Borden, certainly is one of the most beautiful things that ever came from Rom-

ney's easel. It is a question if, even for beauty, it would not hold its own with any of the Lady Hamiltons. If one can imagine one of the classic Graces transferred from Ancient Greece to the England of the 18th century, this is she. For it is a picture that is more like a dream likeness of a fair woman than like a painted canvas.

This aristocratic creature stands full length upon some high point in landscape, her right elbow resting on a pedestal, the arm describing a beautiful curve so that her head rests upon the hand. She appears to be looking afar with a soulful, poetic, dreamy expression on her high-born face. Her dress is white, the contour of her figure more fully brought out by a gracefully draped Pompejan red cloak and the loosely fastened blue scarf.

Lady Glencairn was the second daughter of the tenth Earl of Buchan. In 1770 she married William Leslie Hamilton who died in 1780. She remarried, in 1785 Reverend John Cunningham, who became 15th Earl of Glencairn. As Lady Isabel Hamilton she sat many times to Romney; as Lady Bell Cunningham twice, and twice as Lady Glencairn. These last two sittings were given August 3rd and 8th, 1788 and if it seems unreasonable to suppose that he could have produced this full length portrait of her in two sittings, his familiarity with her from the many previous sittings should be borne in mind. The catalogue of the exhibition states that the identity of the lady is not fully established. There are indeed differences between this portrait and two others of her which Romney is known to have painted. In feature she rather

resembles the Miss Ramus, whom Romney also painted and who will be found persistently entered in his diary as Miss Remus—not Miss Benedetta Ramus, whom he also painted, but her sister who became Marquise de Noailles. This portrait of “Countess of Glencairn” does not appear to have been exhibited prior to the present occasion.

The other Romney which drew many admiring eyes belongs to Mr. Henry C. Frick, and is his portrait of Henrietta, Countess of Warwick and her two children; three full length figures on a terrace, the countess at the right in a white satin dress and seated in a crimson armchair with her right arm around the waist of her daughter, who is leaning against her and looking up into her face, while the boy stands near them with a hoop and looking towards the spectator. The canvas, a very large one, is remarkable for the play of light on the satin dress with its many folds and its reflections of yellow or straw color and almost imperceptible greens, their sheen making an effective contrast between it and the dead white of the little girl's dress. Around the waist of this girl is a blue scarf, a color note leading the eye to the deeper blue coat of the solidly planted boy and toning in with the blue sky in the perspective. Previous to its present ownership the canvas was in the possession of the Earl of Warwick, Warwick Castle.

A piquant face, crowned by a powdered coiffure, but with natural, luxuriant chestnut curls falling to the shoulders close to the neck and bringing out its graceful contour, is that of Lady Dartmouth as shown in her portrait by Sir Joshua

Reynolds, to whom she sat 1781-1782. It was loaned to the exhibition in the Grosvenor Gallery, 1889, by the Earl of Aylesford. With its golden tone, possibly produced by Reynolds' use of gamboge varnish, it fairly glows like a jewel in its frame and is one of the warmest as well as one of the most beautiful of Reynolds' portraits. The rich browns that predominate in the landscape background tone in with the soft golden light that palpitates over the whole canvas. It was previously owned by a member of the Dartmouth family in England from whom it passed to that of Mrs. H. L. Terrell.

The other Reynoldses in the exhibition include the strongly painted portrait of John Julius Angerstein, a work dating from 1765 and now belonging to Mr. J. Horace Harding. It shows the subject in half length in Van Dyck dress, full face and seated, the left arm resting on a pedestal. When Angerstein died in 1823, his collection of portraits, thirty-eight in number, was purchased by the English Government for £57,000. It formed the nucleus of the now famous National Gallery, London. Another attractive Reynolds portrait is that of Lady Skipwith, which Mr. Henry C. Frick acquired in 1891 from Sir Grey Humbertson d'Estotville Skipwith. It had not left the family since it was painted in 1787. Lady Skipwith was the daughter of Hon. George Shirley and married Sir Thomas George Skipwith in 1785. A silver tone is given to the canvas by faint, in fact almost imperceptible, blue touches in the white gown, mere reflections possibly of the blue ribbons in the costume. Mr. M. C. D. Borden owns the Reynolds' portrait of Miss Bridget

Morris, afterward Mrs. Lockwood, a half length, full face, in a low satin dress under a light blue satin jacket edged with ermine; the ornaments being rubies and pearls.

There was in the exposition a most distinguished showing of Hoppner's, all of them extremely well preserved, a characteristic of this artist's pictures, because, almost without exception, they are heavily painted. The largest of these Hoppner canvases, 54 inches wide and 76 inches high, is the property of Mr. P. A. Valentine and is a portrait of Lady Jane Mildmay and child. Lady Mildmay who died in Eaton Square, in May 1857, at the ripe age of ninety-two, had twelve children. The child shown in the picture is her eighth son. The canvas was viewed at the Royal Academy in 1883.

It is imposing not only for its size, but also as a work of art. Lady Mildmay, is shown standing on a terrace. Her costume is white with long flowing patterned sash or shawl. Her right arm is around the child who is seated on a pedestal and has both arms around his mother's neck. The boy also is in white, with legs bare to the knee. The lady's left arm hangs negligently down by her side and the hand holds a sash. Two fluted columns and a vase are to the left and there are trees in the right distance. Lady Mildmay was the daughter of Carew Mildmay of Shawford house, Hants, and married Sir Henry Paulet, who, however, took his wife's name by right of her succession to certain estates.

A detail of the Hoppner portrait of the Countess of Darnley and her daughter, Lady Elizabeth Bligh, belonging to Mr. Philip Lehman, that can hardly escape attention is the

beautiful painting of the mother's hands with their long, tapering, aristocratic fingers, especially the hand that holds the child. The portrait is painted in a beautiful gradation of browns—the mother's brown cloak ; her negligently bound, flowing brown hair, the brown, curly hair of the child falling with exquisite grace over the forehead ; the brownish color of the trees ; all emphasized by the impressionistic glimpse of light and sky in the high left background. The fresh, clear face of the little girl has great charm. The figure of the Countess is shown nearly in whole length. She is seated beneath trees, leaning against a rock, and the child stands at her left. Hoppner's relations with the Darnley family were exceptionally cordial. There was a large collection of portraits by him at Cobham Hall, from where this portrait came.

Mr. M. C. D. Borden is the owner of Hoppner's portrait of Mrs. R. Arbuthnot, a three-quarter length, seated in a landscape under a tree, the face turned to the right. A costume of old gold casts a soft golden tone over the entire canvas, and the skirt, sweeping around and back to the left, makes a beautiful curved line which the eye follows with delight. Mr. E. S. Harkness owns the Hoppner portrait of the Hon. Mrs. Beresford. The portrait of Charles Oldfield Bowles, by Hoppner, a work of great naturalness of pose and charm of surroundings, is owned by Mr. James B. Duke. It is a whole length portrait of a youth in a plum colored dress and with a dog. He is standing under some trees with a river and landscape in the background. The boy was the brother of the Miss Bowles, whose portrait with a dog, a picture famous under

the title, "Love Me, Love My Dog," was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1775-6, and is now in the Wallace Collection. The portrait owned by Mr. Duke came from a member of the Bowles family in England.

While the Sir Thomas Lawrences were only three in number and small, they included the famous portrait of Lady Peel, belonging to Mr. Frick, a canvas notable for the brilliant, yet artistic, effect produced by the trimming of the large black hat, with bright red bird of paradise feathers drooping so low as to form a background not only for the hat, but for the shapely head—a tour de force of contrast. Lady Peel is shown nearly three-quarter length, standing and full face. She wears a dark purple cloak trimmed with white fur, over a low neck, white satin gown. At her breast is a rose. Her hair is parted and worn low over the temples. The left arm in front of her holds the edge of her cloak. Her right arm hangs by her side. Her face is of exquisite beauty, her eyes clear and limpid, and the whole portrait so lifelike you almost expect this beautiful woman's lips to part and greet you.

Lord Ronald Southerland Gower in his book on Lawrence speaks of this picture as a superb work, rich in color and with a charm which places its author on a level with the painter of the well known portrait of Rubens' wife, called "Le Chapeau de Paille," now in the National Gallery, "which certainly had inspired Lawrence, when he painted this portrait of Lady Peel, and which he probably had studied in Sir Robert's gallery at Dayton." Lawrence had a deep affection for the Peel family and looked upon their house as a second home. It was there

he dined a few evenings before his death. The other Lawrences are the portrait of Lady Mary Anne Beaumont and the portrait of Mrs. Fielde, the property of Mr. Adolph Lewisohn.

Sir Henry Raeburn exhibited at Edinburgh, in 1811, a double full length of two boys. This probably was the double full length of the sons of David Monro Binning, a most attractive picture of two boys in plum brownish costumes with white ruffs and stockings and seated in a landscape. It is now the property of Mr. John W. Simpson. The other Raeburns were a portrait of Isabella Brown belonging to Mr. W. H. Sage of Albany; a portrait of Dr. Craigie belonging to Mr. Daniel G. Reid; a portrait of a lady; and a portrait of James Johnston of Straiton.

As a landscape painter Gainsborough was represented by a pastoral scene, with figures and cattle, belonging to Mr. J Horace Harding. Two other pictures by this artist were the frank, direct, solidly painted and somewhat stolid looking Duke of Clarence as a youth in naval uniform, a portrait once owned by the late Duke of Cambridge; and the finely modelled portrait of Lady Dorethea Lethbridge, notable for the charm of the quiet, thoughtful oval face and the manner in which the bust is rounded off at the bottom, almost like a sculpture and not unlike Reynolds' manner in the portrait of his niece, Mary Palmer, Marchioness of Thomond, shown in the Birmingham Portrait Exhibition, 1903; and the portrait of Mrs. Fitzherbert. This is a half length three quarter view, seated. She is looking toward the right, and holding her

right hand up to her head almost on a level with the eye.

Mrs. Fitzherbert figured in a royal romance. She was Maria Ann, daughter of Walter Smythe. She married the first time Mr. Edward Weld of Lulworth Castle, 1775; the second time Th. F. Fitzherbert of Swynnerton, 1778. He died in 1781 and she then married, in 1785, George, Prince of Wales, with whom she lived till 1803. She was one of the most fascinating personalities of her period and a member of one of the old Catholic families of England. Her marriage to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV, was twice denied in the House of Commons. It was finally established from information derived from certain papers deposited in Coutts Bank, which King Edward VII gave permission to William H. Wilkins to publish. The portrait in the exhibition was reproduced as a preface to Wilkins' book. It is mentioned in Armstrong's work on Gainsborough and has been in several important exhibitions abroad, including the British Royal Pavilion, Paris. It was in the collection of the Earl of Fortescue and after passing to different members of the family found its way into the collection of Arthur Sanderson, Edinburgh, the last owner prior to the present one.

A fine example of a Gainsborough man in which the easy, graceful pose, and the gracious, poetic quality of the painting strongly contrasts with the solid little portrait of the Duke of Clarence, is the property of Mr. Daniel G. Reid. The subject is Edmund Morton Pleydell, shown three-quarter length, standing nearly full face and leaning with his left arm on the back of a Chippendale chair. The plum colored

coat is interesting for the manner in which the painting reproduces the soft lustre of velvet. A portrait of Caroline Anne Horde, by Gainsborough, formerly at Cote House, Lambourne, Berks, is the property of Mr. Borden. Two small but very delightful portraits by Sir William Beechey, one of Jeremiah Ives, the other of Mrs. Ives, both exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1788, belong to Mr. Mortimer Schiff.

Mr. Borden owns a fine "Old" Crome in "The Willow Tree." A conspicuous place in the exhibition was occupied by a John Constable, "Stoke by Nayland, Suffolk." This notable work is the property of Mrs. W. W. Kimball, of Chicago. It proves at a glance the contention that Constable's influence was the real inspiration of the Barbizon School of landscape. Any number of "Forests of Fontainebleau" owe their origin to Constable; and this picture shows a quality of brushwork which was vigorous and free at a time when others were painting with laborious attention to detail. Early in the last century Delacroix brought over three Constables from England which so delighted the French, always sensitive to originality in art even when it emanates from a foreigner, that the pictures were placed in the Salon, where they made a deep impresssion. Corot told as much to Harpignies, who still living in sturdy old age, has repeated it to many. Other Constables in the exhibition were "Canal near Newbury" and "Salisbury Cathedral," belonging respectively to Mr. J. Horace Harding and Mr. Henry C. Frick.

There were four Turners: "Mortlake Terrace, Early Summer Morning," and "Antwerp, Van Goyen Looking for a

Subject," belonging to Mr. Frick; "East Cowes Castle, the Seat of J. Nash, Esq., The Regatta Beating to Windward," belonging to Mr. Borden; and "The Burning of The Houses of Parliament, October 16, 1834," belonging to Mr. J. H. McFadden of Philadelphia. This last is one of the most typical of Turners, cool and blue on the right side of the canvas, on the left a swirl of flame reflected on the water and the flare from the conflagration extending to the watchers crowding the left bank even to the extreme corner of the foreground.

A remarkable exhibition — a credit to the house that was able to arrange it by the loan of great paintings in the possession of its own clients and a credit to the latter in that they were willing to part for a while with these masterpieces and allow them to be placed on semi-public view, where they could be studied and enjoyed by a host of art lovers. Nor will the lenders ever regret it. The exhibition will become historic and their paintings will derive greater value from having been in it. Thus the firm's reputation has been enhanced, the value of their clients' pictures increased, and the public's love of art gratified, by this remarkable show of old masters.